

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 04134 01 OF 02 091850Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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P 091841Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9617
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 04134

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S SPEECH AT
PLOERMEL

SUMMARY: AT THE END OF HIS TWO-DAY VISIT TO BRITTANY,
PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING DELIVERED WHAT SOME OBSER-
VERS ARE CALLING THE FIRST POLEMIC SINCE THE BEGINNING
OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE IN MAY 1974. REFERRING TO
THE POSSIBILITY OF A VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN THE 1978
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, GISCARD DECLARED THAT HE WOULD
NOT PERMIT ANY ASSAULT ON FRENCH INSTITUTIONS, ANY
ACTION THAT COULD JEOPARDIZE BARRE'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY
PROGRAM, NOR ANY DISCORD THAT PUTS IN QUESTION THE MAJOR-
ITY CHANCES FOR ELECTORAL SUCCESS. HE GAVE PRIME MINIS-
TER BARRE UNQUALIFIED PRAISE AND CALLED FRENCHMEN TO
MAKE THE NECESSARY EFFORTS TOWARDS UNITY. HIS SPEECH WAS
WARMLY RECEIVED BY THE ESTIMATED AUDIENCE OF 25,000 AND
IS ESPECIALLY WELCOMED NATIONALLY BY THOSE ELEMENTS OF
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PAGE 02 PARIS 04134 01 OF 02 091850Z

THE MAJORITY WHO SEE THE PRESIDENT AS TOO HESITANT AND
TOO WEAK. AS HAS OFTEN BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST, THE
SPEECH WILL PROBABLY SERVE TO REINFORCE THE PRESIDENT'S
IMAGE IN THE SHORT RUN. END SUMMARY.

1. "I WILL NOT PERMIT": IN DEFIANCE OF HIS OWN PUBLIC
DECLARATIONS TO REMAIN ABOVE POLITICS, GISCARD D'ES-

TAING, IN A SPEECH THAT HAS WARMED THE HEARTS NOT ONLY OF HIS IMMEDIATE AUDIENCE, BUT ALSO OF THOSE SUPPORTERS THROUGHOUT THE NATION WHO ACCUSE HIM OF SO MANY SHORTCOMINGS, DECLARED THAT HE WOULD NOT PERMIT ANYONE TO MEDDLE WITH FRANCE'S INSTITUTIONS. "WHEN NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE AT STAKE, PETTY QUARRELS SHOULD BE SET ASIDE." GISCARD INSISTED ON THE PRIMACY OF THE CHIEF OF STATE AS SET FORTH IN THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION AND ATTACKED THE LEFT, NOTABLY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PCF, FOR ATTEMPTING TO DICTATE CONDITIONS SHOULD THE OPPOSITION BECOME A MAJORITY IN THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. (NOTE: THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO GEORGES MARCHAIS' RECENT DECLARATIONS THAT IF THE LEFT WINS IN 1978, THE PRESIDENT SHOULD EITHER SUCCUMB AND PUT IN FORCE THE COMMON PROGRAM OR RESIGN FROM HIS OFFICE.) GISCARD, WITH UNCOMMON FORCE, SET FORTH AS HE SAW IT THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS ON THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN OF A LEFT VICTORY: A TOO POWERFUL BUREAUCRACY, ECONOMIC CENTRALIZATION AND A PUTTING IN DANGER OF FRENCH INSTITUTIONS. HE HELD HIMSELF UP AS THE GUARANTOR AND THE DEFENDER OF THESE INSTITUTIONS.

2. JACQUES CHIRAC: A SECOND THEME OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS THAT THE MAJORITY SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AND SHOULD CEASE ITS PETTY QUARRELING. IN LANGUAGE THAT EVERYONE INTERPRETED AS BEING ADDRESSED TO HIS FORMER PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC, GISCARD MINCED NO WORDS. "WHILE ALL THE TIME DECLARING THEMSELVES FAITHFUL TO INSTITUTIONS, PEOPLE SHOULD STOP THWARTING PRESIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 04134 01 OF 02 091850Z

ACTION. THE PRIMACY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC IS AN IMPORTANT LEGACY FROM GENERAL DE GAULLE TO FRANCE. WITHOUT IT THERE IS NO GAULLIST CONTINUITY."

3. THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER: IN A REFERENCE TO GASTON DEFFERRE'S RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE, IN WHICH HE DECLARED THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD NAME MITTERRAND PRIME MINISTER IF THE LEFT WINS IN 1978, GISCARD REPLIED THAT "IT IS NOT THE PART OF OPPOSITION LEADERS....COUNTING THEIR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY'RE HATCHED, TO DICTATE WHAT WILL BE THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT."

4. RAYMOND BARRE: THE PRESIDENT WENT ON TO UNDERScore HIS TOTAL SUPPORT AND ESTEEM FOR PRIME MINISTER RAYMOND BARRE, CLAIMING HE CHOSE HIM "FOR HIS COMPETENCE, DEVOTION AND COURAGE WHICH REAFFIRMS ITSELF EVERY DAY." HE DECLARED THAT NOTHING SHOULD COME IN THE WAY OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND REITERATED THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROLE AS COORDINATOR OF THE MAJORITY. "HE AND HE ALONE WILL

ANIMATE AND COORDINATE THE LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN OF 1978

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PARIS 04134 02 OF 02 091856Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 04134

AND HE WILL DO IT WITH MY FULL SUPPORT." THE PRESIDENT
ENDED BY IMPLORING HIS AUDIENCE NOT TO LET ITSELF BE
BORNE ASTRAY BY "FALSE WISEMEN WHOM I KNOW WELL AND
WHOSE LESSONS DON'T IMPRESS ME. LET'S THROW AWAY THE
IDEA OF A REGIMENTED SOCIETY; LET'S ACCEPT OUR DIFFER-
ENCES SO LONG AS THEY ARE NOT CONTRARY TO JUSTICE....
FRENCH UNITY IS NOT UNIFORMITY."

5. COMMENT: THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH HAS BEEN PARTICULA-
RLY WELL RECEIVED BY THE MAJORITY PRESS AND EVEN BY SUCH
LEFT-OF-CENTER PUBLICATIONS AS THE "QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS,"
WHICH STARTS OFF ITS EDITORIAL, "HAVE WE REDISCOVERED A
PRESIDENT?" WHILE GISCARD'S ABILITY TO HOLD HIS OWN IN
PUBLIC APPEARANCES IS ADMITTED BY EVEN MANY OF HIS OP-
PONENTS, HIS BRITTANY SPEECH OF 2/8 IS CONSIDERED PAR-
TICULARLY STRONG AND BENEFICIAL TO THE PRESIDENT'S IMA-
GE. EARLY REACTIONS FROM THE OPPOSITION ARE PREDICTABLY
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PAGE 02 PARIS 04134 02 OF 02 091856Z

HOSTILE, WITH "HUMANITE" CRYING THAT THE CLASSIC RIGHT HAS REDISCOVERED ITS LEADER (WHICH IS JUST WHAT THEY SAID WHEN JACQUES CHIRAC LAUNCHED HIS RPR ON DECEMBER 6, 1976). IT WILL BE INTERESTING, WHEN THEY APPEAR, TO NOTE THE REACTIONS OF RPR LEADERS, WHO HAVE LONG CONSIDERED THEMSELVES THE ONLY MUSCLED OPPONENTS OF THE COMMON PROGRAM. IN EFFECT GISCARD'S SPEECH IS DOUBLY IMPRESSIVE BY DINT OF HIS HAVING WAITED SO LONG TO POLEMICIZE. FOR ONCE HE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A "RIGHT" POLITICAL MOVE, WHICH AT THIS CRUCIAL PERIOD -- ONLY 5 WEEKS AWAY FROM THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS -- HAS REINFORCED SOMEWHAT HIS OWN IMAGE WITHIN THE MAJORITY AND PERHAPS INDIRECTLY THE CHANCES OF THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY, WHOSE FATE IS SO INEXTRICABLY TIED UP WITH THAT OF THE PRESIDENT.

6. GISCARD IS FINALLY PUTTING ON HIS BOXING GLOVES. FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS THE IDEA THAT A LEFT VICTORY IN 1978 IS INEVITABLE HAS BECOME VIRTUALLY ACCEPTED IN THE PUBLIC PSYCHE. GISCARD DESERVED PART OF THE BLAME BECAUSE OF HIS EMPHASIS ON HIS DETERMINATION TO SERVE OUT HIS FULL SEVEN-YEAR MANDATE TO THE EXCLUSION OF ANY ANTI-LEFT CAMPAIGNING. THE PLOERMEL SPEECH IS A GOOD START TOWARD THE PARTISAN APPROACH THE MAJORITY NEEDS FROM THE PRESIDENCY AT THIS TIME. GISCARD'S TALK ABOUT SAFEGUARDING FRENCH INSTITUTIONS IS A REFERENCE TO THE INTENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC CONSTITUTION THAT IS NOW THE GREAT POLITICAL FASHION IN PARIS. WHILE BEGGING AS MANY QUESTIONS AS HE ANSWERED, GISCARD HAS NONETHELESS SERVED NOTICE THAT HE IS ALSO ANALYZING THE CONSTITUTION, AND THAT THE MITTERRAND/MARCHAIS INTERPRETATION IS NOT NECESSARILY THE RIGHT ONE. FINALLY, GISCARD'S PUBLIC PRAISE OF RAYMOND BARRE IS AN EXCELLENT TACTIC. BARRE'S PUBLIC POPULARITY IS STEADILY ON THE RISE, AND HIS NAME IS ASSOCIATED WITH A SIMON-PURE OBJECTIVE: ECONOMIC STABILITY. EVEN JACQUES CHIRAC FINDS IT NECESSARY TO SAY NICE THINGS ABOUT BARRE. IF

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PAGE 03 PARIS 04134 02 OF 02 091856Z

THE PLOERMEL SPEECH IS NOT JUST A ONE-SHOT DEAL, IT COULD MEAN THAT GISCARD MAY AT LONG LAST BE GETTING SOME USEFUL POLITICAL ADVICE OR A BETTER POLITICAL NOSE.
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